



Violence-Free Zone Initiative MILWAUKEE FACT SHEET October, 2009

THE VFZ PROGRAM:

The Violence-Free Zone initiative was created by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) to address youth violence in schools and communities. The VFZ is directed by CNE, and is implemented by community-based organizations at each location. Violence-Free Zones are successfully reducing youth violence in schools in Atlanta (6), Baltimore (4), Dallas (13), Milwaukee (8), and Richmond, VA (1) for a total of 32 schools across the country.

THE SCHOOLS:

In Milwaukee, the Latino Community Center leads the VFZ at Bay View, Bradley Tech, Madison, and South Division High Schools. Running Rebels Community Organization leads the VFZ at Custer, North Division, Vincent, and Washington High Schools.

WHY IT IS UNIQUE:

The Violence-Free Zone approach is unique in that it utilizes young adults from the same neighborhoods and backgrounds as students in the schools. Called Youth Advisors, they are able to prevent violence, resolve conflicts, and motivate students to responsible behavior. Because they have faced and overcome the same challenges, they receive the students' trust and confidences. They serve as role models that individuals can overcome their environments, and confiding in them is not regarded as snitching.

HOW IT WORKS:

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise provides overall direction and management of the VFZ initiative. The community-based organizations hire, screen, train, and supervise the Youth Advisors at each school. The Youth Advisors act as hall and cafeteria monitors, mentors, counselors, and role models, and establish trust relationships with the students. In addition, teachers assign groups of high risk students to the Youth Advisors, who meet with them at lunch or other times to discuss and work out the issues that trouble them. The Youth Advisors report to and support the school administration, teachers, counselors and security staff and assist them in every way they can. The community-based organizations also offer after-school, weekend, and summer programs, creating 24-7 relationships with young people.

HOW MANY:

There are up to seven (7) Youth Advisors assigned to each school, including a Supervisor. In Milwaukee, there are approximately 900 students enrolled in the intensive Violence-Free Zone mentoring program in the eight Milwaukee schools.

FUNDING:

The Milwaukee Violence-Free Zone initiative is funded by Milwaukee Public Schools, the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, and Helen Bader Foundation, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Elizabeth Brinn Foundation, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Marshall and Ilsley Foundation, Faye McBeath Foundation, Northwestern Mutual Foundation, Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation, and David and Julia Uihlein,

THE ORGANIZATIONS:

Center For Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE)

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1981 by Robert L. Woodson, Sr. CNE's mission is to transform individuals, schools, and troubled communities from the inside out. To achieve its goals CNE employs a four-pronged approach: 1) Identify effective leaders of neighborhood organizations who have existing programs that are compatible with CNE's mission and who have the trust of community residents; 2) Provide training and technical assistance to help those organizations build capacity, by strengthening their organizational infrastructure; 3) Link them to outside resources, and 4) Measure their impact and recommend public policies to facilitate their efforts and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers. CNE has provided training and technical assistance to more than 2,600 leaders of faith-based and community organizations and has affiliates in 39 states. Over the 27 years of its existence, the organization has expended about \$35 million and leveraged more than \$350 million for grassroots organizations in its network. The Center has a major focus on reducing youth violence with its Violence-Free Zone initiative. Other major programs include Training and Technical Assistance for Community Organizations, and Adult Financial Literacy Training.

CNE's Milwaukee VFZ Community Partners

Latino Community Center (LCC)

Founded in 1999, the Latino Community Center has programs serving over 2,000 youths each year in the near south side of Milwaukee, one of the most disadvantaged parts of the city where gang activity, particularly among rival Latino gangs, is rampant. Violence-Free Zone street outreach and gang prevention workers go out on the streets in the afternoon and evening when youth activity is greatest. LCC also uses hip-hop and other culturally specific references to draw hundreds of youth into its building each day, where they are then connected to fun and safe academic, recreational, social, and cultural activities, including but not limited to after school, teens, girls and summer programming. LCC has operated the Violence-Free Zone program in Milwaukee for six years beginning in South Division High School. LCC implements the VFZ in Bay View, Bradley Tech, Madison, and South Division High Schools.

Running Rebels Community Organization (RRCO)

Running Rebels was founded in 1980 by Victor Barnett, who serves as Executive Director. Located in the central city, it is a nonprofit committed to helping youth develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. The agency serves more than 1,000 children from the ages of 10-18, most of whom live in the central city and range in age from 10-15. Many are referred through the court system and are overcoming barriers within their family, school, and community. Most of the 97 paid staff (part and full-time) members are minority members, as are members of the volunteer Board of Directors. Programs include mentoring, youth services, intensive monitoring, athletics, entrepreneurship, and music. The Running Rebels Community Organization implements the VFZ approach with Youth Advisors working in four Milwaukee High Schools-- Custer, North Division, Vincent, and Washington High Schools.